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ABSTRACT

An examination was made of a representative sample of language arts subtests on achievement test batteries and language arts textbooks to assess the skills tested and determine the material included in the instructional sequence. The four achievement test batteries were the California Achievement Tests, the Comprehesive Test of Basic Skills, the Iowa Test of Basic Skills, and the Stanford Achievement Test. The language arts series included "Patterns of Language" (American Book Company), "Language for Daily Use" (Harcourt, Brace and Jovanovich), and "Language Basic Plus" (Harper and Row). Among the findings were the following: (1) tests actually tested a small number of skills and few of those were directly related to writing skills; (2) test exercises were structured so as to rely heavily on contextual clues, thus testing students' reading abilities, not their ability to manipulate language; (3) large portions of the tests were given to testing mechanics; (4) the largest number of activities in the textbook series related to grammar and usage, while the next stressed area involved vocabulary and oral language skills; (5) writing was one of the least emphasized skills in the textbook series; and (6) in two of the three text series, the number of writing activities decreased as the grade level increased. (HOD)

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AN EVALUATIVE COMPARISON OF LANGUAGE ARTS ACHIEVEMENT SUBTESTS AND LANGUAGE ARTS TEXTBOOK SERIES

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Of major concern to all educators, are the standards and means by which students are evaluated. In no other area are these standards as nebulous as in the area of written language skills. Attention was focused on student written language skills when a national magazine, Newsweek (1975) declared that "Johnny Can't Write." Debates waged, and continued as educators defensively reacted to falling test scores and declining student achievement reports. One has only to glance at a professional journal (Algozzine, Barnett, Carter, Davidson, Henry, Hudstedler, Maxwell, and Weeks, 1981) to become acquainted with the concerns of teachers, administrators, and educators at all levels over declining student achievement. Yet, in all the concerns raised, two major areas of the instructional sequence are not being addressed: the influence of standardized tests and commercial textbooks. Both heavily influence what happens in a given classroom and should be given equal consideration in trying to determine what is happening in U.S. education.

Testing is a major factor of the American school environment. Every school system in the United States supports a testing program that is accepted by all levels of society (Resnick, 1981). On the average, American schools administer five standardized tests per

year with the standarized achievement test being the type most commonly used. The most prevailing pattern (Sproull and Zubrow, 1981) for school systems is to begin administering achievement tests at grade one and to continue until grade eight. While not all agree on the use of tests to the teacher (Salmon-Cox, 1981), one must concede that testing is a major part of U.S. education.

Another important factor to consider are the materials used to structure learning activities. For most teachers who are already overwhelmed with the paperwork and day-to-day management of the classroom, the textbook is an organized, catalogued source of curriculum considered suitable for instruction at a particular grade (Green and Perry, 1975). The importance of commercial materials is further reinforced by the Educational Products Information Exchange Institute (1976) which claims that 95% of all instructional activities are based on commerically prepared materials.

While the purpose here is not to suggest that all instructional activities in an elementary classroom are geared to what is on a standardized achievement test or to what is contained in commercially prepared textbooks, it is to suggest they may be factors in the instructional scheme. If the goal is to determine why student writing skills are not meeting the standards of society then all factors, including these, need to be examined.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine a representative sample

of language arts subtests on achievement test batteries and language arts textbooks to make an assessment of the skills being tested, what is included in the instructional sequence, and to make a comparison to determine, if they do relate to the expected writing skills of students. This information will then be examined to determine what, if any, implications can be drawn about the development of student writing skills.

Hypotheses The following hypotheses were formed:

1. Language arts subtest of achievement test batteries are measuring a very limited number of skills and that these skills are not highly related to writing.
2. Language arts textbooks are not presently formated in such a manner to encourage written language skills.
3. These influences are a factor in the declining writing proficiency of U.S. students.

Significance of the Study

It is hoped that this study will help to identify the extent to which language arts subtest of achievement test batteries and language arts textbooks, in their present form, influence the curriculum in language arts and student writing skill development. Such information can be utilized to develop more effective curriculum and instructional strategies in a manner designed to enhance and build student writing proficiency.

Delimitations

For the purpose of this study, four achievement test batteries: California Achievement Tests, the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills, the Stanford Achievement Test, and the Iowa Test of Basic Skills, and three language arts series, Patterns for Language (American Berh Company, 1974), Language for Daily Use (Harcourt Brace and Jovanovich, 1978), and Language Basics Plus (Harper and Row, 1979), which are assumed to be representative of the content universes will be examined.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED RESEARCH

In examining the research of others, information was drawn from research on language arts, language arts textbooks, the language arts curriculum and its relationship to writing, and the relationship of grammar to writing. Each is discussed separately.

Language Arts Research: This section explores the relationship of communications, the methods of teaching, and relationships within an area.

In a study on the effect of direct oral and written language instruction (Lloyd, 1980), it was determined that direct instructional methods were the most successful means overcoming learning difficulties for L.D. students.

Kroll (1979) based the ability of some students to communicate in writing better than others on two theoretical concepts. Some students, she stated, learn language in a conscious formal learning situation while others acquire language in an internalized process that is natural and without conscious focus.

Sheldon (1976) reported on a study that involved integrating of reading and writing in which the majority of earlier writers studied exhibited an ability and interest in writing prior to reading.

Hong (1978) reviewed research on language arts and concluded that an explicit knowledge of language was not always desirable. She believes that research supported the idea that children should be exposed to language and be provided with experiences that enhance language usage.

The real basics, according to Winterowd (1977) are not the surface features of language or grammar. Student attention in writing, according to this author, should be to syntactic fluency and to a responsibility for what one has written.

Loban (1879) attacked the theory of a hierarchy of language skills building from the simpliest to the complex. It is his belief that students need to grapple with the whole constellations of meaning rather than the pieces.

Shary (1981) argued that context is the critical issue in teaching oral and written English. He states that there is a distinct advantage to an analytic, constructive, holistic view of language learning and training.

The implications of Piagetian theories and language skills are discussed by Bissell (1972). From his study, he concluded that the incorrect answers and errors of children are more illuminating and informative to the teacher than learning situations which provide only formal right, wrong situations. By seeing the child's stage of language development and thought process, teachers are better able to direct language instruction to areas beneficial to the student.

Straw (1981) stated that strong relationships have been found to exist among the language arts because of certain basic and common psychological and linguistic competencies that underlie language processing. All four areas, listening, speaking, reading, and writing, depend on common competencies and knowledge. He recommends more instruction in sentence-combining which he believes will significantly aid the student to develop in writing more mature syntax, organization, style, tone, point of view, cohesion, and theme.

Language Arts Textbook Content: Most language arts instruction is based on the language arts textbook. The following explores what researchers are saying about textbook content.

A computer-assisted analysis of nine language arts textbooks series (Gentry, 1981) to determine if a common agreement existed on what punctuation skills should be taught at a given grade level. Of the thirty-four skills identified by the analysis, only six were taught in all textbooks. The author concluded it was difficult to detect a systematic pattern of instruction and that, in fact, wide differences occurred among the textbooks.

In a follow-up of the above study (Gentry, 1981), capitalization skills were examined. The author found that significant differences occurred regarding introduction, sequence, and the amount of skills taught. He recommended that teachers should examine textbooks carefully to determine what skills are taught and the amount of practice given. He suggested that a significant

amount of supplemental material may be necessary to adequately teach capitalization skills.

McClusky (1978) reported that the back-to-basics movement is having a major impact on English/language arts textbooks resulting on more emphasis on absolute rules such as spelling, punctuation and correct usage.

Benthul (1978) examined the trends of language arts textbooks past and present. He concluded that textbook content needs to be improved to meet society's expectations and educational trends.

Allen (1977) attempted to put language arts and linguistics into perspective. He concluded teachers must be trained to make English the central core of their teaching. He suggest teachers push for more sound language information in language arts textbooks and class-tested materials for student use.

Language Arts books at grades two and five of eight language arts series were examined by Graves (1977) to determine how well the series reflected current research on the writing process. He determined that textbooks present very limited composing activities and ignored critical areas such as pre-writing, composing or post-composing, voice development and self-critical capabilities of the students.

Language Arts Curriculum and Writing: The relationship between the language arts curriculum and writing are explored in this section. While writing is but a part of the total language arts curriculum,

the relationship to other parts of the curriculum are well-established.

Koczwara (1977) discussed the role of the elementary school in preparing students for the junior high school curriculum. In this paper, she stressed that the degree to which children are introduced to language arts skills depends upon their capabilities and grade level as well as what the teacher, department and school system consider important. She recommends that children develop skills in sentence writing, mechanics, poetry, listening, conversation, spelling, handwriting, and references as preparation for the junior high school curriculum.

Schlawin and Chew (1978) discussed the role of school leadership in determining what happens in the language arts classroom. They cited the role of administrators and supervisors in developing and implementing language arts program and strongly recommended that instructional leaders and teachers work closely together in areas of curriculum development.

Groff (1978) disputed earlier claims on the relationship between a child's oral and written language development. He does not believe that research proves the relationship of a close and highly positive relationship between the two aspects of language development.

Baden (1981) investigated the relationship between composition ability and reading scores, pre-kindergarten verbal ability, self-concept and sex. This study determined that a significant

relationship existed between composition skills and composite reading skills, between pre-kindergarten verbal abilities and third grade writing performances, between self-concepts and composition ability and between teacher's evaluations using a checklist and the results of normed composition tests. No significant differences occurred between boys and girls. She concluded this study supported the conclusion that language arts skills are interrelated and reciprocal and recommended methods of teaching be used which combine reading and writing skills.

Four stages of writing development (Froese, 1978) in the elementary grades were identified. These stages were readiness, diction, independent writing stressing sentence forms, and language experimentation which resulted in creative writing. He recommended that teachers structure language activities to the developmental stage of the child.

Gordon (1981) believes that controlled compositions are a means of increasing writing fluency. This method involves students copying well-written short compositions which they change in a meaningful way. The teacher accepts any response that makes sense. Errors are marked but the student must figure out what is wrong. A pilot study determined that students using this method in combination with free writing increased their fluency by 17% and reduced mechanical errors by 43%. A matched control group studying traditional sentence structure did not increase fluency at all and mechanical errors were reduced only by 15%.

McDonnell and Osburn (1980) believe that writing development occurs in three stages: beginning or readiness, transitional, and composition. They recommend teachers prepare evaluation according to the stage that the child seems to be. They also provided criteria for establishing evaluation procedures.

Marzano and DiStefano (1979) analyzed 750 randomly selected essays of 9-, 13-, and 17-year olds from the National Assessment of Educational Progress. Their date suggests that five composition skills are related to writing: subordination between clauses, modification within sentences, sentence sense, grammar and usage, and vocabulary. These skills, suggested the researchers, should be taught at each grade level with a slightly different emphasis. They also determined that the use of punctuation and capitalization was not related to quality at any level.

Graves and Calkins (1980) compared students taught to use punctuation skill in context with students taught punctuation skills in isolated exercises. Their data, as well as classroom observations and dialogues with students, indicated that students showed more use and understanding when punctuation was taught in context.

Grammar: Grammar, the formal study of language, presently is a major area of the language arts curriculum. As such, its relationship, importance, and influence on the writing skills is explored.

Kean (1981) discussed the relationship of grammar to written

language. He concluded that grammar should be taught on a-need-to-know basis within the context of a writing program with as little terminology as possible. He contends that grammar provides very little functional use in communication situations and is a very minor aspect of standardized testing. He encourages instruction focused on sentence building or combining, and regular opportunities, carefully controlled within the capabilities of the student, for writing.

Maisterheim (1977) criticized the teaching of formal grammar prior to sixth grade stressing its ineffectiveness in improving composition skills. He proposed that grammar be eliminated and that instruction emphasize language usage, spelling, and student practice in writing.

In contrast, Fraser and Hodson (1978) disagree with the argument gram ar instruction does not have transfer value. They believe there is no conclusive research to show that a knowledge of grammar makes a student write badly. They make these conclusions: grammar instruction provides teachers and students a set of terms for discussion, that an inert body of knowledge does not transfer itself and what is known is transferable, and that grammar does not exist outside of sentences.

Nystrand (1976) expressed concern about the substance of language arts test in their present norm-referenced and criterion-referenced form fail to meet the requirements of ontological validity. He feels that it may be feasible to evaluate writing

skills better by using a well-constructed multiple-choice cloze test.

CHAPTER 3

PROCEDURES

The goal of this investigation was to analyze the content of the language arts subtests of selected achievement test batteries and language arts textbook series.

The Tests: The language arts subtest of four achievement test batteries were examined and analyzed for skill content. These tests were: the California Achievement Test, the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills, the Iowa Test of Basic Skills and the Stanford Achievement Test. The California Achievement Test series is comprised of nine levels appropriate for grades K.6 through 12.9. The subtests analyzed were Language Mechanics and Language Expression. The Comprehensive Tests of Basic Skills is comprised of four levels appropriate for use with grades 2.5 through 12.9. The subtests analyzed were Language Mechanics and Language Expression. The Iowa Test of Basic Skills is comprised of six levels appropriate for use with grades 3 through 9 (the test appropriate for use with grade 8 is stated to be appropriate for grade 9 as well). The subtests analyzed were capitalization, punctuation, and usage. Three levels of the Stanford Achievement Tests were analyzed, Intermediate I appropriate for grades 4.5 to 5.4, Intermediate II appropriate for grades 5.5 to 6.9, and Advanced appropriate for

grades 7.0 to 9.5.

These tests were analyzed for both the type of skill being assessed and the percentage of the subtest that skill represented. Skills were grouped into major categories to allow patterns to be more easily discerned.

The Language Arts Textbooks: Three series of elementary language arts textbooks were analyzed. The language arts textbooks at elementary levels, grades one through six, are designed to teach a variety of skills. At seventh grade, however, the language arts curriculum is broken into two main components, composition and literature. It was felt that this provided a natural breaking point in the curriculum, and for the purposes of this study it is best to examine only the elementary levels. Three series, PATTERNS OF LANGUAGE (American Book Company) LANGUAGE FOR DAILY USE (Harcourt, Brace and Jovanvitch) and LANGUAGE BASIC PLUS (Harper and Row) for grades one through six were analyzed. The teacher's guide and student book for each level was used. Each book was examined for the type of skill being taught or reinforced. The primary purpose of the activity determined how it was categorized. For example, if a given activity had the student to supply the correct verb tense and then re-copy the sentence with correct capitalization and punctuation, then the activity was classified as a verb tense exercise because it usually followed a sequence of learning about verbs and the mechanics practice was incidental to

the learning. In this method, all learning activities within the eighteen language arts books were broken down into specific skills which were then regrouped into nine categories that allowed easier comparisons to be made. These nine subheadings were oral communications, vocabulary, literature, reading, writing, grammar, usage, study skills, and mechanics. The following is a brief description of each category and the types of skills included in that category.

Oral Communication: Two areas comprise this category. Listening skills include literary appreciation, poetry, listening for comprehension, for phonological discrimination, and to follow directions. All involve the child listening for a purpose. Speaking skills included speaking to others individually, in small groups, or before a class, giving reports, understanding dialects, and using and understanding language. All exercises included stressed the student speaking to others.

Vocabulary: Skills included exercises to extend vocabulary through categorizing words, synonyms, antonyms, rhyming words, using context clues, homophones, contractions, compounds, multi-meaning words, allerations, definitions, sensory words, analogies, affixes, homographs, euphemisms and load words, acronyms, etomology, signal words for reality and fantasy, jargon, phonetic exercises, syllabication, spelling patterns and word games.

Literature: Skills included here were exercises on legends,

tall tales, fables, poetry, myths, humor appreciation, choral readings, stories to be read aloud, identifying types of reading, fiction, symbolism in literature, and literature suggestions.

Reading: Skills included predicting outcomes, figurative expressions, comprehension exercises, determining fact from fiction, character feelings, making inferences, fact or opinion, idioms, sensory imagery, determining point of view, cause or effect, readiness skills, purpose, sequence, and reading rates.

Writing: Skills included format and organization of a paragraph (indenting), sequence of words in a sentence or paragraph, rewriting for conciseness, writing main idea sentences, writing a paragraph, constructing a sentence from a topic, expanding a given sentence, announcements, filling out applications, correct envelope format, letters-friendly and business, classroom rules, research reports and book reports. Creative writing included writing from an assigned topic, writing about feelings and emotions, using effective language, to illustrate sensory imagery, rewriting a story as a play, point of view, poetry, limmericks, and legends.

Grammar: Skills included identifying and using plural and possessive nouns, pronouns and their referents, verbs, auxilliaries and tenses, adjective determiners and comparatives, adverbs, prepositions, conjunctions, and interjections.

Usage: Skills included exercises on noun and verb phrases,

correct usage of verbs and modifiers, use of negatives, subject-verb agreements, building sentences, recognizing run-ons and fragments, restatement as questions, identifying sentence types, negative statements, basic sentence patterns, simple and compound sentences, and sentence word order.

Study Skills: Skills included exercises that covered alphabetizing, dictionary use, classifying, Dewey Decimal system, using reference sources, maps, parts of a book, charts, outlining, note-taking, and following directions.

Mechanics: Punctuation skills included use of periods, commas, question marks, apostrophe, exclamation points, quotation marks, writing abbreviations, colons, and underscoring. Capitalization skills included first word in a sentence, proper names and pronouns, I, and titles. Editing and proof-reading exercises to correct capitalization and punctuation were also included in this category.

Miscellaneous: In every book examined there were a few exercises that did not fit any of the explained categories. While these sometimes in total make up as much as 10% of a given book, they were an insignificant part of the total series. These skills included dramatics, non-verbal communications, and exercises and activities designed to explore student feelings and emotions.

The skill assignments and subheading above were those determined by the examiner. The scope and sequence charts and

and schema provided by the publishers of the series were not used.

A tabulation was made to determine the total number of exercises per book and per total program for each of the defined categories. From this, it was possible to determine the exact percentage for each book and series. These percentages were then used to compare the learning activities from book to book and series to series.

The Writing Skills: The writing skills within each textbook were analyzed to determine the types of skills covered, the number, and the proportion of instructional activities allotted to these activities. The specific skills were classified into five types of writing skills. These skills are: organizational, letters, report or expository writing, functional, and creative writing. These categories are defined as:

Organizational: Included in these categories are exercises that develop paragraph format, indentation practice, sequencing words in sentences or paragraphs, writing a main idea or topic sentence, rewriting in a more concise way, and expanding sentences.

Letters: Included exercises on writing friendly letters, thank you letters, business letters, and envelope format.

Report or Expository: Included exercises on writing announcements, writing classroom rules, paragraphs, book reports, and

researched reports.

Functional Writing: Included exercises on filling out applications.

Creative Writing: Included writing poetry, limmericks, paragraphs and stories based on student imagination, exercises on feelings and emotions, developing colorful language, developing sensory imagery in writing, writing plays from stories, developing stories from different points of view, conversations, and writing legends.

The exercises were tabulated by book and by series, and assigned to one of the above defined categories.

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS

The Tests: While some tests separated the mechanics, punctuation and capitalization subtests from other language skills, others treated it simply as a total part of the language arts subtest. Therefore, for the purposes of comparison, these skills are included as part of the total language arts area. Examination of the four test batteries at all levels produced a small scheme of objectives being tested. These skills could be grouped into four major areas: mechanics, usage, organization, and miscellaneous skills. The skills included in each area are:

> Mechanics which involved selecting the correct punctuation and capitalization in context.
>
> Usage which involved selecting the correct verb, pronoun, or modifier (both adjective or adverbial) in sentence context, identifying sentences containing double negatives, and identifying a complete sentence from a run-on or fragment.
>
> Organization (not included on all tests) which ask the student to select the proper sequence of sentences within a paragraph.
>
> Miscellaneous skills (not included on all tests, but in some) that covered dictionary usage, spelling errors, and identifying word forms that do not fit into other named categories.

As shown in Table 1, in every test battery large parts of the tests were used to determine correct use of mechanics. The California Achievement Tests devoted 53% of the test at Level 12, 40% at Level 13, 36% at Levels 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, and 19. The Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills produced similar results. At Level 1, 40% of the test was mechanics, while at Levels 2, 3, and 4, 36% of the test measured this skill. On the Stanford Achievement Test Intermediate I, 46% of the test assessed mechanics, while Intermediate II showed 40% and the Advanced Battery 45%. The Iowa Test of Basic Skills used a separate subtest each for capitalization and punctuation, but at grades 3 and 4 these comprised 70% of the language skills, 72% at grades 5, 6, and 7, and 74% at grade eight.

The California Achievement Tests assessed usage in the following manner. At Level 11, 100% of the language expression subtest was designed to evaluate student ability to determine correct usage of nouns, pronouns, verbs and adjectives. At Level 12, 50% of the items covered usage, 32% at Level 13, 24% at Level 14, 15, and 16, and 16% at Levels 17, 18, and 19. The ability to recognize correct or complete sentences from run-ons or fragments comprised 7% at Level 12, 28% at Level 13, 30% at Levels 14, 15, and 16, and 38% at Levels 17, 18, and 19.

The Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills assessed usage 44% at Levels 1 and 2, 56% at Level 3, and 45% at Level 4. Identification of double negatives was assessed only at Level 1 and that comprised

2% of that test. Sentences structures were by 4% of the items on Level 1, and 9% of items on Levels 2, 3, and 4.

On the Stanford Achievement Tests, usage comprised 21% of the Intermediate I, 23% of Intermediate II, and 21% of the Advanced Level. Identification of negatives was assessed only on the Intermediate I, this comprised 2% of these items. Sentence structures comprised 18% of the Intermediate I and II tests, and 17% of the Advanced tests.

The Iowa Test of Basic Skills assessment of usage comprised 21% of grade 3, 18% of grade 4, 19% of grade 5, 18% of grades 6 and 7, and 20% of grade eight. Identification of double negatives comprised 1% at grade 3, 2% at grade 4, 3% at grades 5, 6, and 7, and 2% at grade 8. Sentence structures comprised 8% of the items at grades 3, 4, and 5, 7% at grades 6 and 7, and 4% of grade 8.

Paragraph organization was assessed on only two batteries, the California Achievement Tests and the Comprehensive Tests of Basic Skills. On the California, these items comprised 10% of the test on Levels 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19. On the Comprehensive Tests of Basic Skills, these items comprised 10% of Level 1, 11% of Level 2, and 9% of Levels 3 and 4.

Assessment of dictionary skills comprised 8% of Level Intermediate I, 18% of Level Intermediate II, and 17% of the Advanced Level on the Stanford Achievement Test.

Miscellaneous spelling patterns comprised 5% of the Stanford Achievement Test, Intermediate I level. Miscellaneous word forms

comprised 1% of the items at grades 5, 6, and 7, and 3% of the items at grade 8 of the Iowa Test of Basic Skills.

The Language Arts Textbooks: The skills covered in the language arts textbook were grouped into major categories (which have been defined with the methods section). For the purposes of comparison, two types of results are reported: individual book and total series. By these methods instructional activities may be examined by both grade and total program expectations. The individual assessments showed the following results: (Tables 2, 3, and 4 summarizes this information).

American Book Company - Patterns for Language

Book 1: Exercises in the book were comprised of, 13% punctuation, 7% capitalization, 12% correct usage, 10% study skills, 14% vocabulary, 21% oral communications, and 5% miscellaneous.

Book 2: Exercises in this book were comprised of 5% punctuation skills, 12% capitalization skills, 18% grammar, 13% usage, 10% writing, 20% study skills, 11% vocabulary, 9% oral communications, and 2% miscellaneous skills.

Book 3: Exercises in the book comprised 7% punctuation, 5% capitalization, 23% grammar, 8% usage, 9% writing, 11% study skills, 0.3% literature, 6% reading skills,

Table 2
Percentage of Instructional Activities
Based on Area of Language Arts

Patterns for Language

	1	2	3	4	5	6
Punctuation	13	5	7	6	4	2
Capitalization	7	12	5	2	3	1
Editing/Proofreading					0.6	1
Grammar	18	18	23	16	20	27
Usage	12	13	8	17	19	5
Writing		10	9	12	9.6	4.8
Study Skills	10	20	11	13	13	8
Literature			0.3	0.9	1	14
Reading			6	8	6	13
Vocabulary	14	11	14	14	13	7
Oral Communications	21	9	12	11	4	7
Miscellaneous Skills	5	2	4.7	.1	6.8	10.1
Total No. of Exercises	186	212	322	426	436	413

14% vocabulary, 12% oral communications and 4.7% miscellaneous skills.

Book 4: Exercises in the book were comprised of 6% punctuation, 2% capitalization, 16% grammar, 17% usage, 12% writing, 13% study skills, 0.9% literature, 8% reading skills, 14% vocabulary, 11% oral communications, and miscellaneous skills.

Book 5: Exercises in the book were comprised of 4% punctuation, 1% capitalization, 0.6% editing or proof-reading, 20% grammar, 19% usage, 9.6% writing, 13% study skills, 1% literature, 6% reading skills, 13% vocabulary, 4% oral communications and 6.8% miscellaneous skills.

Book 6: Exercises in the book were comprised of 2% punctuation, 4% capitalzation, 0.4% editing or proofreading, 21% grammar, 16% usage, 8% writing, 12% study skills, 6% reading skills, 12% vocabulary, and 10% oral communication.

Harcourt, Brace and Jovanovitch - Language for Daily Use

Blue: Exercises in the book were comprised of 2% punctuation, 4% capitalization, 18% grammar, 14% usage, 6% writing, 10% study skills, 2% literature, 18% reading skills, 7% vocabulary, 18% oral communications, and 1% miscellaneous skills.

Table 3
Percentage of Instructional
Activities Based on Area of Language Arts

Language for Daily Use

	Blue	Red	Green	Orange	Purple	Brown
Punctuation	2	5	12	10	5	6
Capitalization	4	13	11	6	0.6	.4
Editing/Proofreading		.8	.9	.6		1
Grammar	18	13	22	34	39	36
Usage	14	6	5	7	9	9
Writing	6	21	18	10.3	15	6
Study Skills	10	3	9	5	9	3
Literature	2	4	3	4	1	10
Reading	18		0.3	0.3	1	7
Vocabulary	7	5	10	15	7	8
Oral Communications	18	26	8	4	7	8
Miscellaneous Skills	1	8.2	.8	3.8	6.4	5.6
Total No. of Exercises	125	241	319	312	445	416

Red: Exercises in the book were comprised of 5% punctuation, 13% capitalization, 0.8 editing or proofreading, 13% grammar, 6% usage, 21% writing, 3% study skills, 4% literature, 5% vocabulary, 26% oral communications and 8.2% miscellaneous skills.

Green: Exercises in the book were comprised of 12% punctuation, 11% capitalization, 0.9% editing or proof-reading, 22% grammar, 5% usage, 18% writing, 9% study skills, 3% literature, 0.3% reading skills, 10% vocabulary, 8% oral communications and 0.8% miscellaneous skills.

Orange: Exercises in the book were comprised of 10% punctuation, 6% capitalization, 0.6% editing or proof-reading, 34% grammar, 7% usage, 10.3% writing, 5% study skills, 4% literature, 0.3% reading skills, 15% vocabulary, 4% oral communications and 3.8% miscellaneous skills.

Purple: Exercises in the book were comprised of 5% punctuation, 0.6% capitalization, 39% grammar, 9% usage, 15% writing, 9% study skills, 1% literature, 1% reading skills, 7% vocabulary, 7% oral communications and 6.4% miscellaneous skills.

Brown: Exercises in the book were comprised of 6% punctuation,

0.4% capitalization, 1% editing or proof-reading, 36% grammar, 9% usage, 6% writing, 3% study skills 10% literature, 7% reading skills, 8% vocabulary, 8% oral communications and 5.6% miscellaneous skills.

Harper and Row - Language Basics Plus

Book A: Exercises in the book were comprised of 2% punctuation, 6% capitalization, 33% grammar, 13% usage, 7% writing, 8% study skills, 0.9% literature, 6% reading skills, 12% vocabulary, 9% oral communications and 3.1% miscellaneous skills.

Book B: Exercises in the book were comprised of 3% punctuation, 4% capitalization, 37% grammar, 7% usage, 10% writing, 11% study skills, 0.9% literature, 5% reading skills, 14% vocabulary, 4% oral communications and 4.1% miscellaneous skills.

Book C: Exercises in the book were comprised of 8% punctuation, 5% capitalization, 0.4% editing and proof-reading, 26% grammar, 14% usage, 9% writing, 7% study skills, 0.8% literature, 20% vocabulary, 4% oral communications and 5.8% miscellaneous skills.

Book D: Exercises in the book were comprised of 9% punctuation, 4% capitalization, 0.8% editing and proof-reading, 28% grammar, 11% usage, 10% writing, 9%

Table 4
Percentage of Instructional
Activities Based on Area of Language Arts

Language Basics Plus

	A	B	C	D	E	F
Punctuation	2	3	8	9	9	5
Capitalization	6	4	5	4	5	4
Editing/Proofreading			0.4	0.9	0.5	0.7
Grammar	33	37	26	28	33	30
Usage	13	7	14	11	10	13
Writing	7	10	9	10	11	16
Study Skills	8	11	7	9	10	10
Literature	0.9	0.9	0.8	3		
Reading	6	5	.9	1	2	2
Vocabulary	12	14	20	15	15	18
Oral Communications	9	4	4	.3	4	.1
Miscellaneous Skills	3.1	4.1	5.8	8.9	1.5	1.2
Total No. of Exercises	106	207	469	544	564	566

reading skills, 15% vocabulary, 0.3% oral communications and 8.9% miscellaneous skills.

Book E: Exercises in the book were comprised of 9% punctuation, 5% capitalization, 0.5% editing and proofreading, 33% grammar, 10% usage, 11% writing, 10% study skills, 1% reading skills, 15% vocabulary, 4% oral communications, and 1.5% miscellaneous skills.

Book F: Exercises in the book were comprised of 5% punctuation, 4% capitalization, 0.7% editing and proofreading, 30% grammar, 13% usage, 16% writing, 10% study skills, 2% reading skills, 18% vocabulary, 0.1% oral communications and 1.2% miscellaneous skills.

In looking at the total series, the skill breakdowns are: (Table 5 summarized this information)

Punctuation:	American Book Company	5%
	Harcourt, Brace & Jovanovitch	7%
	Harper & Row	7%
Capitalization:	American Book Company	4%
	Harcourt, Brace & Jovanovitch	5%
	Harper & Row	5%
Editing and Proof-reading:	American Book Company	0.4%
	Harcourt, Brace & Jovanovitch	1.0%

Table 5
Percentage of Instructional
Activities of Total Language Arts Series

	American Patterns For Language	Language for Daily Use	Language Basics Plus
Punctuation	5	7	7
Capitalization	4	5	5
Editing/ Proofreading	0.4	1	0.7
Grammar	21	30	30
Usage	16	8	12
Writing	8	12	12
Study Skills	12	8	9
Literature	6	4	1
Reading	6	2	2
Vocabulary	12	9	17
Oral Communications	10	10	3
Total No. of Exercises	1995	1858	2456

	Harper & Row	0.7%
Grammar:	American Book Company	21.0%
	Harcourt, Brace & Jovanovitch	30.0%
	Harper & Row	30.0%
Usage:	American Book Company	16.0%
	Harcourt, Brace & Jovanovitch	8.0%
	Harper & Row	12.0%
Writing:	American Book Company	8.0%
	Harcourt, Brace & Jovanovitch	12.0%
	Harper & Row	12.0%
Study Skills:	American Book Company	12.0%
	Harcourt, Brace & Jovanovitch	8.0%
	Harper & Row	9.0%
Literature:	American Book Company	6.0%
	Harcourt, Brace & Jovanovitch	4.0%
	Harper & Row	1.0%
Reading:	American Book Company	6.0%
	Harcourt, Brace & Jovanovitch	2.0%
	Harper & Row	17.0%
Vocabulary:	American Book Company	12.0%
	Harcourt, Brace & Jovanovitch	9.0%
	Harper & Row	17.0%

Oral Communications:	American Book Company	10.0%
	Harcourt, Brace & Jovanovitch	10.0%
	Harper & Row	3.0%

In the individual book, a number of miscellaneous skills made up a small percentage of the total exercises. However, in the total number of exercises in a given series, these skills were not a significant number and as such are not represented in the above percentage.

The Writing Skills: The writing skills in the language arts textbooks were grouped into five categories (which have been defined within the methods section). For the purposes of comparison, two types of results are reported: individual book and total series. By this method, instructional activities may be examined by both grade and total programs expectations. (This information is summarized in Table 6.) The individual books showed the following results:

American Book Company - Patterns for Language

Book 1: No exercises on any writing skills.

Book 2: Exercises in this book were comprised of 62% organizational skills, 17% letters, and 19% creative writing.

Book 3: Writing exercises in this book were comprised of 8% organizational skills, 27% letters, and 65% creative writing.

Book 4: Writing exercises in this book were comprised of 24% organizational skills, [illegible] letters, and 26% creative writing.

Book 5: Writing exercises in this book were comprised of 47% organizational skills, 32% letters, 22% report or expository writing, and 9% creative writing.

Table 6
Percentage of Types of Writing Exercises

Series Level	No. of Exercises	Organizational	Letters	Reports/ Expository	Functional	Creative
Patterns of Language						
1						
2	21	62	19			19
3	26	8	27			65
4	51	24	50			26
5	45	47	22	22		
6	20	5	30	30	20	15
Total	163	30	32	10	3	25
Language for Daily Use						
Blue	8	37	38	25		
Red	51	14	18	21		47
Green	60	20	40	5		35
Orange	31	32	38	26		4
Purple	65	15	14	26		45
Brown	38	13	53			
Total	253	19	30	16		35
Language Basics Plus						
A	7	57	43			
B	22	18	36	23		23
C	44	27	36	18		18
D	53	17	26	38		19
E	41	12	31	31		41
F	97	19	22	13		46
Total	264	20	27	23		30

Book 6: Writing exercises in this book were comprised of 5% organizational, 30% letters, 30% report or expository writing, 20% functional, and 15% creative writing.

Harcourt, Brace and Jovanovitch - Language for Daily Use

Blue: Writing exercises in this book were comprised of 37% organizational, 38% letters, and 25% report or expository.

Red: Writing exercises in this book were comprised of 14% organizational skills, 18% letters, 21% report or expository writing, and 47% creative writing.

Green: Writing exercises in this book were comprised of 20% organizational skills, 40% letters, 5% report or expository, and 35% creative writing.

Orange: Writing exercises in this book were comprised of 32% organizational skills, 38% letters, 26% report or expository, and 4% creative writing.

Purple: Writing exercises in this book were comprised of 15% organizational skills, 14% letters, 26% report or expository writing, and 45% creative writing.

Brown: Writing exercises in this book were comprised of 13% organizational skills, 53% letters, and 34% creative writing.

Harper and Row - Language Basics Plus

Book A: Writing exercises in this book were comprised of 57% organizational skills and 43% report or expository writing.

Book B: Writing exercises in this book were comprised of 18% organizational skills, 36% letters, 23% report or expository, and 23% creative writing.

Book C: Writing exercises in this book were comprised of 27% organizational skills, 36% letters, 18% report or expository, and 18% creative writing.

Book D: Writing exercises in this book were comprised of 17% organizational skills, 26% letters, 38% report or expository, and 19% creative writing.

Book E: Writing exercises in this book were comprised of 12% organizational, 31% letters, 31% report or expository, and 41% creative writing.

Book F: Writing exercises in this book were comprised of 19% organizational skills, 22% letters, 13% report or expository, and 46% creative writing.

The proportion of writing exercises in the language arts series are as follows:

Organizational	American Book Company	30%
Skills:	Harcourt, Brace & Jovanovitch	19%
	Harper & Row	20%
Letters:	American Book Company	32%
	Harcourt, Brace & Jovanovitch	30%
	Harper & Row	27%
Report or	American Book Company	10%
Expository:	Harcourt, Brace & Jovanovitch	16%
	Harper & Row	23%
Functional:	American Book Company	3%
	Harcourt, Brace & Jovanovitch	0%
	Harper & Row	0%
Creative	American Book Company	25%
Writing:	Harcourt, Brace & Jovanovitch	35%
	Harper & Row	30%

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY

The purpose of this investigation was to determine what skills are emphasized in language arts subtests of achievement test batteries and language arts textbooks and to make some implications about the development of writing skills in students. Overall, it appears that heavy stress is being given to the teaching and particularly the testing of mechanics and grammatical skills. To use the results of a language arts subtest, one can conclude that a student does or does not possess a few mechanical skills, may or may not be able to match subject-verb agreements, or be able to correctly identify modifer use in context.

More specifically, tests examined actually tested an extremely small number of skills and few of these are directly related to writing skills. Large amounts of the tests are allotted to testing mechanics. It is a consistent percentage of all the tests at all levels, yet instructional activities decrease as the grade level increases. Also, there seems to be some question among researchers as to whether the type of skill really relates to writing skill.

The stress on usage - All of the exercises are structured in such a way as to rely heavily on contextual clues. One can not but question whether or not these tests are not more a reading

test than a language test. Granted that the ability to use subject-verb agreements, verb tenses and correct modifiers are signs of mature writers but in their present format, the advantage is with the student who most efficiently uses contextual clues.

Identifying complete sentences, run-on, and fragments are included on every test level of every battery. This is an important skill in written language and its inclusion is correct. It seems that this skill would be highly related to writing skills and while the California batteries allot a significant amount of practice, other tests do not. This might be a skill that test preparators may want to develop more fully.

The organizational skills: While these skills were included on only two batteries, some questions must be raised on their inclusion. As the items on this skill are presently structured, they seem to be measuring the students' ability to determine and use time sequence clues. One cannot but question whether or not this really measures a writing skill or not. Here again the emphasis seems to be more on reading than writing.

On the Stanford and Iowa, a number of miscellaneous skills have been thrown into the language usage sections. These skills include dictionary exercises, spelling, and miscellaneous word forms. It does not seem that these skills were included to gauge language effectiveness so much as to extend the test to some pre-determined length.

Thw whole area of language testing as it is now done on

standardized tests should raise some legitimate questions in test users. The tests seem on the whole to test not the students' ability to manipulate language, but rather the students' reading abilities. Is it not time to question whether or not we need more reading tests. Perhaps it's time to consider if there is a better way to evaluate student language abilities that exists that we are not utilizing. Nystrand (1976) suggested and this reviewer agrees, that the time has come to assess the ontological aspects of context validity of language arts assessment tests.

The Textbooks: The three textbook series exzmined provided a number of skills related to language skill being taught but at the same time also raised a number of questions about what instructional activities are being emphasized.

The largest amount of activities in every book of every series is on grammar in spite of the fact that for years researchers have suggested that grammar is not an effective way to teach writing proficiency. In view of the research, and the ever-increasing demands on teachers and students, isn't it time to really come to terms with this issue. If isolated exercises on writing nouns, verbs or modifiers are not beneficial to students then let's move on to areas that are.

One must question too, the amount of time spent on the mechanics of writing. Here again, practice seemly conflicts with what the researchers seem to be saying. These isolated exercises are just

that, isolated exercises, which provide the student little opportunity to go beyond rote learning. Is it not time to give more practice to the student in meaningful context? Research seems to be pointing that way, and yet the textbook structure conflicts here too.

In their present format textbooks teach a variety of skills. The most stress is given to grammar and usage, which combined represent anywhere from 30 to 50% of a given textbook. The next stressed area (judging by the number of learning activities) are vocabulary and oral language skills which seem to represent about the same proportion. Ranked next would be the skills of mechanics: capitalization and punctuation. Study skills represent the next largest group of skills. Students are given a lot of exercises and practice on dictionary skills, using the card catalog, and getting to know the library. About seventh or eight (depending on how each skill category is combined) are writing skills. The only skills receiving less instructional activities than writing are reading which represents a range of 0.3% in a couple of books to a high of 13% in another, literature which receives 0.3% to 13% of the instructional activities and miscellaneous skills that seem to be space fillers more than anything else.

Writing skills are one of the least emphasized skills in all the language arts textbooks examined. One of the major conclusions of this investigation is that if students of today can't write it is because writing is one of the least emphazized skills they are

taught. The amount of instructional activities given to all types of writing ranged from a low of 4.8 in one book to a high of 21%, yet, in the textbooks examined this represented less instructional activities than grammar, usage, vocabulary development, oral language development, and study skills! Writing activities on the average represent about 10% of a series activities, not a large amount if the goal is to build student writing proficiency. Also, it is important to note that in two of the three series examined, the number of writing activities decreased as the grade level increased. If we accept that a student learns by doing, how can we justify decreasing the amount of writing as the student matures in grade level? This needs to be addressed.

The writing exercises were examined and categorized for the purposes of this study and there needs to be some discussion on the whole area of writing. If the area of writing is stressed only 10% of the time then how that 10% is spent becomes extremely important. That 10% breaks down in the following ways: approximately 20 to 30% of that time is spent teaching organization skills such as writing sentences, paragraph formation, and putting sentences into proper sequence of a paragraph. All are skills important to writing that seemed to be introduced in a sequenced logical way in the textbooks.

The next area of writing, letters, represents about 30% of the instructional activities. Students spend hours of instructional time writing friendly letters, thank you notes, addressing envelopes

and in a few instances, even writing a business letter. But one must question whether or not this is really a relevant activity. Deighton (1971) suggests, and it seems to be a very reasonable suggestion, that in this age of electronic communications, as educators we are stressing a skill, letter writing, that may have little relevance to the student's everyday life. And if this is indeed the case, would it not be better to emphasize other areas of writing?

Report or expository kinds of writing receive less emphasis than friendly letters but may in fact be more meaningful to students. The ability to state, in a clear concise way, factual information is a skill beneficial to all. If the instructional activities stress gathering information as we do with study skills, then should not students be given the opportunity to develop that gathered information into clear concise writing? In the series examined, writing factual information was stressed in only approximately 10-20% of the writing activities.

Another area that ties closely to the report and expository writing is functional writing. Functional writing was defined to mean writing used on forms and applications. Only one textbook of the eighteen examined even included any practice on this type of writing. Yet the ability to fill out forms and applications is one of the most needed skills in our society today. The ability to state information in a clear, concise way in an often pre-determined amount of space, is one of the skills students will be most likely

to need. Yet, it is hardly taught at all.

Students are asked to do creative writing exercises about 25 to 35%. These skills cover a variety of exercises from writing exercises designed to create more colorful, interesting writing, to poetry. Again, here the concern lies with the relevance to the student. Writing, as all learning, must be presented in a context that is meaningful to the student. These activities provide the means for students to explore, manipulate, and make language work in classrooms.

Language arts subtest, it seems, are providing little information about a student's ability to manipulate language. And if in fact, a teacher uses the test as a guide to what to cover in a language arts program, then very little instruction will be geared toward developing writing skills. All of the skills on the tests are better taught by stressing reading skills rather than language skills.

The language arts textbooks stress a lot of skills, but again, writing skills are not the largest part of any program. If a teacher truly wants to build writing skills, then she/he is going to have to develop the resources or obtain the needed materials on procedures at some other source because textbooks do not provide it.

One can not keep from concluding that the present stress of skills other than writing may indeed be part of the problem as to why Johnny or Susie can't write. Teaching skills in isolation,

stressing grammar at levels where students do not need it, all are factors that pull time away from writing. If we want students who write, then the message through learning, must be that it is important and will be stressed more than 10% of the time.

If the language arts textbooks and achievement tests examined are representative of those that exist, and it is believed they are, then it seems that they do not positively stress writing skill development. The skills tested are not primarily writing skills. The amount of exercises structured to develop writing skills are not a large part of the textbooks. It is possible to conclude that students can't write because they really are not being taught. If education is to be accountable, then the instructional emphasis from teachers, materials and tests must be more finely honed. At the present, they are not.

Recommendation for Further Study: As this study occurred, other observations were made and may point the way for further study. In two of the three textbooks examined writing exercises decreased as the grade level increased. Is this because students are less willing to write? Teachers less willing to teach? Do students need less writing practice as they mature? These questions need to be addressed.

Also related to the problem is the fact that as the grade level increased, the amount of exercises structured for oral responses seemed to increase. If, students do learn through language experience, shouldn't the stress on oral language be more in the primary grades where there are more immature learners? Why the stress on oral responses in upper levels? Are students benefitted more in the oral approach? This needs to be considered.

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